

This bill is not just about our farmers and ranchers. This is a bill that affects every single American, and it is time we come together on an amendment package and find a way to move forward and get this bill done for the good of farm country and for the good of the American people.

I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the role.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### AGRICULTURAL REFORM

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, as we wrap up today and the week, I wish to take a few moments to give a status report as to moving forward in our negotiations on the farm bill. We have actually had some very good progress and overcome some obstacles and we are putting together something for the Senate for the beginning of the week that will allow us to move forward.

I wish to also thank the junior Senator from North Dakota whom I heard on the floor a little while ago, Mr. HOEVEN, about the 250 different amendments we have. Of course, the great thing about the Senate is we can all offer amendments whether they are relevant or not, and the challenge for someone managing a bill is that anyone can offer amendments. So we have worked our way from the 250, we are working our way down from 50 to 40 and putting together an approach that will be fair and balanced and allow us to move forward and have the input of everyone on both sides of the aisle.

So I wish to thank Senator ROBERTS again for being truly a partner with me all the way through this process and a terrific committee. We heard from one of those members, the junior Senator from North Dakota, in laying out what a positive and important bill this is for us. I wish to thank him as our newest member of the committee for all his contributions as well.

To briefly recap as we bring the discussion to a close this week, there are 16 million people who work because of agriculture. They may be working in the fields. They may be packaging, processing, making machinery for agriculture. They could be doing a number of things, but 16 million people work because of agriculture. I am not sure we can say any other individual bill that has been brought to the floor of the Senate impacts that many people—16 million people.

As I have said so many times, I don't believe we have a middle class in this country unless we make things and grow things. I am proud of Michigan where we do that. We make things and grow things. The State of the Presiding Officer as well makes things and grows

things. That is the strength of our economy.

One of the bright spots for us, even during the deepest, toughest times in the country, and certainly in Michigan, has been and continues to be agriculture, our major source of a trade surplus, having seen the trades expand 270 percent just over a short period of time, and over 8,000 jobs created for every \$1 billion we do in trade exports. So there are multiple facets to this jobs bill, from production agriculture, alternative energy, biomanufacturing, whether it is support for the critical needs of families through nutrition, whether it is conservation, where we have the largest investment in land and water conservation in our country on working lands, done through the farm bill.

This is important. It covers many important subjects that touch every single person in rural America and every person across this country as consumers of the safest, most affordable food supply in the world. So we have an obligation to get this right and to take the time to do it, and that is exactly what we are doing.

I am so proud this bill came out of committee with a broad, bipartisan vote and that we had such a very strong vote to proceed to the bill and now we are moving through the process of bringing us down the path to a final conclusion.

As we do that, I wish to stress again a few points. We could talk a long time because this has many pieces to it, and I am not going to do that this evening. But I do want to say one more time, to my knowledge, this is the one piece of real deficit reduction done on a bipartisan basis—in fact, on a House-Senate basis back in the fall—that we have had before the Senate.

There is \$23 billion in deficit reduction. So we all have an opportunity to vote to reduce the deficit—something we all care about—and we can do that while passing the farm bill. This repeals direct payments. Four different subsidies, in fact, are repealed. In its place, we put a risk management system.

So if there are losses, if there is a disaster from weather, such as we have seen in Michigan, if there are other disasters on price declines, world actions that create a challenge for our farmers or ranchers, we will be there to make sure nobody loses their farm because there are a few days of bad weather or any other risk that is beyond their control. However, if things are going well, we are not going to be giving a government payment.

We are going to cover farmers for what they plant and when there are losses. We are strengthening payment limits so we again are focusing precious dollars on those who need it, and we end more than 100 different programs and authorizations. As we have scoured every single page of the farm bill and the USDA responsibilities, we have found areas where there is dupli-

cation, redundancy, things that are no longer needed, and we have solidified, made things more flexible, cut duplication. In the process of that, we have actually eliminated 100 different programs and authorizations, cut \$23 billion. At the same time, we have continued our commitment to families and children in this Nation who have their own personal disasters and need food assistance help.

We continue a strong commitment on conservation. We have 643 different conservation and environmental groups that have come together to support our approach, 125 different agriculture and hunger groups, and other organizations that say yes to this bill. We are anxious to get it done.

I would just say, as we conclude a very busy week—and I have to say it has been a very productive week—we began a process. We have had some votes. We have had a number of folks come together. I thank people on both sides of the aisle for their willingness to work with this as we move forward on our path to completion of this very important 5-year bill. I wish to indicate to everyone that we will look forward to having the opportunity next week to present something to the body.

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I was unable to arrive at the Senate Chamber in time for Senate rollcall vote 119. I would have opposed tabling amendment No. 2393 to S. 3240. The outcome of the vote would not have been changed had I been present.

I thank the Chair.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BEGICH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### HURWITZ NOMINATION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I would like to express my strong support for the nomination of Andrew Hurwitz to be a member of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Justice Hurwitz is already an experienced judge, having served for almost 10 years as a member of the Arizona Supreme Court. He has disposed of hundreds of cases and has received the highest possible rating from the American Bar Association Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary, "well qualified."